Not A Soldier

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Not A Soldier

by WordsAblaze

Summary

"Will?"

“I need—" Will groans at the effort it takes to force the words out, "—your help.

“I’m on my way,” Hannibal replies immediately, his voice clear and firm. If he hadn’t initially sounded a little groggy, Will might have assumed he’d still been awake.

He’s not sure which of them hangs up, and his eyes are burning with the effort of keeping his gaze locked on his unconscious attacker by the time he hears a car pull up outside. Even so, he doesn’t move until Hannibal kneels in front of him.

Notes

sorry in advance for the ridiculous amount of commas,,,

day 8 prompts used: outnumbered

See the end of the work for more notes

Will knows he's right about the crime scene being a message for him— *to* him.

He knows he's right, and he doesn't understand why the others can't see that. It's almost glaringly obvious that this is the work of a copycat with a grudge rather than the Chesapeake Ripper, but nobody else is willing to entertain the possibility, too caught up on the fact that the wounds have been inflicted with surgical precision.

"It's not like Chesapeake is home to just the one surgeon," Will mutters to himself, pinching the bridge of his nose.

"Will!" Jack calls, and his feet are moving before he can consider *not* immediately obeying the implicit order. When the two are within earshot of each other, Jack nods his head to the left. "Go home, Will."

I don't need you anymore , goes unsaid.

With a sigh, Will doesn't even argue. He knows he's outnumbered because Price, Zeller, *and* Beverly are all on Jack's side this time, and he has no interest in annoying any—all—of them more than he already has.

His skin prickles as he makes his way back to his car, and he casts one last glance over the scene as he goes, deciding that his paranoia may be getting the better of him when nothing appears to be out of the ordinary. The victim is still dead, the blood is still red, his coworkers are still ignoring him, and the sky is still blue. Everything is in order, so he goes home.

Everything stays in order as he lets the dogs out, finishes up the latest few lures, and brings the dogs back in. Everything stays in order even as he feeds the dogs, slips into his night clothes—the same as his day clothes, but a different set—and settles to try and get some sleep. In fact, everything is still in order as the sun sets and the sky darkens and he begins to doze off; the disorder only really starts when Winston lets out a sharp, warning bark.

Will is wide awake within seconds, but even those seconds are too slow.

There are hands around his neck before he can reach out to grab the knife on his bedside table. Which, ultimately, is for the best, because his attacker is decidedly much stronger than him and he would have just dug his own grave by revealing its presence, which he discovers as the two of them roll off the bed in a tangle of struggling limbs.

They hit the floor hard, and Will uses the momentum to his advantage, reversing their positions so *his* hands are around the other man's neck. His advantage doesn't last long; he has no choice but to jerk backwards when fingers dig into his eyes, pain shooting through his head. He cries out, and his attacker manages to grab his hair, bringing his head down hard against the floor, once, twice.

Ears ringing and eyes throbbing, he kicks at the direction he's all but *hoping* his attacker is in. He must have calculated right, because a groan that he knows isn't his own echoes in the darkness. A hollow victory, because his attacker responds with a blow to his stomach that

leaves him gasping, a perfect target for the barrage of punches that land across his torso, moving upwards until hands are wrapped tightly around his neck for the second time.

The crime scene floats to the front of his mind, the awful collar of bruises around the victim's neck flashing behind his eyelids. Will grits his teeth and brings his knees up as hard as he can, jostling his attacker enough to loosen his grip, and for him to scramble backwards, towards his dogs.

Encouraged by his presence, the pack leaps to defend him, and his attacker clearly hadn't done his homework because he goes down fast, vastly outnumbered by rows upon rows of sharp, angry canines.

Will takes the opportunity to catch his breath, and crawls over to the light switch, blinking rapidly to dispel the blurriness of his vision as his attacker aims a foot towards Buster. "No!" he yells, flinging himself forwards.

The two of them land awkwardly, heavily, and his attacker yells in pain as his head hits the floor. Will doesn't give him even a second to recover, grabbing the nearest object—a self help book Alana had pointedly gifted him—and bringing it down onto his attacker's face, again and again and *again* until he stills entirely. Tabby barks loudly behind him, and Will scrambles backwards, abruptly casting aside the bloodstained book that had managed to help him after all, though most certainly not in the way Alana had intended.

"Good job, guys," he croaks as the pack nestles around him, wincing at both the sound of his voice and the awful, sandpaper pain in his throat.

He knows the dangers of strangulation, of swelling and struggling and slowly losing the ability to breathe long after the immediate threat has passed. He knows the dangers, so he grabs his phone from the bedside table and selects the only number he has on speed dial.

"Will?"

"I need—" Will groans at the effort it takes to force the words out, "—your help.

"I'm on my way," Hannibal replies immediately, his voice clear and firm. If he hadn't initially sounded a little groggy, Will might have assumed he'd still been awake.

He's not sure which of them hangs up, and his eyes are burning with the effort of keeping his gaze locked on his unconscious attacker by the time he hears a car pull up outside. Even so, he doesn't move until Hannibal kneels in front of him, obscuring his view and taking up his entire line of sight.

"Will," Hannibal murmurs, his hands covering Will's own. Blinking slowly, Will glances down and watches blankly as Hannibal coaxes the knife—he must have grabbed it along with his phone—from his shaking fingers, pocketing the weapon before gently squeezing his hands. "There you are."

Will opens his mouth to ask where else he could have been but Hannibal shushes him. "No, no, I wouldn't recommend talking right now. Come, we must ice those bruises of yours

before they swell."

And he lets himself be led to the kitchen, not really paying attention until something cold brushes against his temple. He flinches, and Hannibal's hand comes up to gently abort the movement, his hand cupping the left side of Will's face. "You have a gash on your head, Will. You must let me clean it."

With his other hand, Hannibal guides Will's own to his neck, atop the ice pack there. "Keep this in place, please."

Again, Will follows his direction without thinking, letting the world fade away as Hannibal skillfully cleans and treats the gash above his right temple, the one on his jaw, and the several others scattered across his arms. Twice, his hands are re-positioned as the ice pack is replaced, but he hardly notices, all his remaining energy focused on breathing in harmony with Hannibal.

It hurts to swallow, and the pain grounds him. As soon as Hannibal steps back and meets his gaze, Will shivers, and convinces himself it's just the ice pack suddenly making itself known rather than the glint of something dark and violent and vengeful in Hannibal's eyes. "Cold," he whispers.

Hannibal offers him half a smile. "Yes, I suppose you would be," he replies, and, instead of moving to grab one of the countless blankets scattered around the place, he shrugs off his own coat and drapes it over Will's shoulders. In return, Will shivers again, but hums contently, pulling the soft fabric tighter around himself.

"Who was he?" Hannibal asks.

Will stiffens, but relaxes again when Hannibal brushes his curls back, his touch the gentlest Will has ever known. "Latest copycat."

The intensity of Hannibal's immediate frown almost startles him. He knows, without a doubt, that Jack will be receiving yet another earful in the next few days, not to mention the most passive aggressive email of his life, but he can't bring himself to sympathise because a small —not so small—part of him absolutely relishes in that fact.

On that note, Will takes a moment to question why he hadn't called the FBI, or even the police for that matter. The answer, though, comes to him before doubt has any chance to set in: Hannibal was the most comfortable option. Not the most logical and probably not the most legal but, between the lack of pity and abundance of solutions, definitely the least stressful means of help.

"I will take care of him," Hannibal announces after a long pause, proving the point he doesn't know Will is internally debating, "but I must insist that you return with me for the night. It's clearly not safe for you here and your breathing requires monitoring for at least twenty four hours."

"Okay," Will agrees quietly, because he doesn't see why not. Hannibal, clearly not having anticipated him to agree so readily, smiles softly at him in what, bizarrely, appears to be

pride.

He doesn’t know what there is to be proud of when all he’s done is let his guard down, nearly be strangled to death, rely on his pack to save his life, make a mess, and force Hannibal to clean up said mess, but, equally as bizarrely, he finds himself, albeit far more tiredly and far less enthusiastically, beaming right back.

End Notes

remember that smile after the mild seizure scene? that's the vibe here :)

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